Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554



| In the Matter of) | | CASE CORETARY |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| j | CC Docket No. 95-155 | |
| Toll Free Service Access Codes) | | |

AMERITECH REPLY

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The Ameritech Operating Companies (Ameritech) respectfully submit this reply to comments in the above-captioned proceeding. Ameritech's initial comments set forth in detail Ameritech's positions on the many issues raised in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (the Notice). This reply focuses on three issues only: (1) the Commission's proposal to require that, by February 1997, all local exchange carrier (LEC) switches be equipped with the software necessary to support all currently-reserved toll free codes; (2) treatment of so-called vanity numbers and, in particular, the extent to which 800 service subscribers should be able to obtain the 888 number corresponding to their 800 number; and (3) the role of Database Services Management, Inc. (DSMI) in administering the SMS/800 database.

A. The Commission Should Not Require LECs to Deploy Software Needed for all Toll Free Codes by February 1997

One of the Commission's many proposals for ensuring that an adequate supply of toll free numbers remains available is to require that, by February 1997, all LEC switches be capable of supporting all toll free codes reserved by the industry in January 1995. These codes include 888, 877, 866,

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and so on, to 822. Out of the more than 100 comments filed, only a few commenters support this proposal.¹ Ameritech submits that this lack of support underscores that the proposal is both unnecessary and unwarranted.

In proposing the February 1997 deployment deadline, the Commission states: "[s]ince the major switch vendors have already committed to developing the software and, in many cases, have already developed the software necessary to support all of the reserved toll free codes, we do not anticipate any technical obstacles to this proposal." Ameritech's comments point out that this statement is incorrect, that Ameritech's largest switch vendors have not yet committed to developing the software needed for all toll free codes. Other commenters report that they too have not received commitments from their switch vendors for the software necessary for all toll free codes.³ Because the February 1997 date wrongly assumes software development commitments that have not been made, and may not be possible to make, the Commission cannot adopt this proposal.

Ameritech also notes in its comments that the deployment of all currently designated toll free codes would require significant changes to the SMS/800 system. The precise nature of these changes has not yet been

See MCI Comments at 20; LCI International, Inc. Comments at 3; Telecommunications Resellers Association Comments at 14; and Paging Network, Inc. Comments at 5.

Notice at para. 29.

SWBT Comments at 14-15; National Telephone Cooperative Association Comments at 2-3; BellSouth Comments at 11-12; PacTel Comments at 8; GTE Comments at 4-6; SNET Comments at 2. See also AT&T Comments at note 27 (acknowledging that further switch software releases would be required to implement codes other than 888 and 877 for switched without AIN software).

determined. It is therefore impossible to assess at this time whether these changes could be implemented by February 1997. Thus, even if the switch requirements the Commission proposes could be made by February 1997, it is not clear that making them would serve any purpose since the corresponding SMS/800 changes might not be ready at that time.

Apart from the fact that it may not be technically possible to meet the Commission's proposed February 1997 deadline for switches or for SMS/800 changes, there are other compelling reasons why the Commission should not establish specific dates by which LECs must implement the switch software needed for all toll free codes. First, it is inappropriate for the Commission to micromanage network deployment decisions. The Commission has neither the expertise nor the information to make decisions about how LEC networks are best designed and constructed, and it should not purport to make such decisions unless there are compelling and overriding public policy reasons to do so. Those reasons do not exist here. Rather, LECs have every incentive to upgrade the switches as necessary to accommodate all toll free traffic. Indeed, if they do not, they stand to lose significant access revenues.⁴

Second, the February 1997 deadline the Commission proposes is both arbitrary and unreasonable. There are approximately 8 million numbers in each toll free code. During the height of the "run" on 800 numbers, the

While special measures were required to ensure premature exhaust of 800 numbers, for a number of reasons, those circumstances are not likely to repeat themselves in the future. For one thing, no one could have predicted the "run on numbers" that attended the announcement that the 800 code was nearing exhaustion. The industry will be far more ready to prevent and address any similar "run" that occurs in the future. Second, it is unlikely that a similar "run" would occur in any case, since the 800 code has unique value as the exclusive toll free code for the past thirty years. Other toll free codes are not likely to acquire similar value and, therefore, are not likely to precipitate a similar reaction when they approach exhaust.

highest weekly consumption rate was a little over 100,000 numbers. Even assuming, arguendo, that this consumption rate became the norm for 888 numbers, and that 15% of all 888 numbers were reserved prior to the deployment of 888 access, it would take at least 60 weeks for 888 numbers to reach exhaustion. Yet the Commission proposes to require LECs to deploy software not only for 877 access, but for 866, 855, 844, 833, and 822 access — all within 48 weeks of 888 implementation. There is no reason for such an overly-ambitious deployment schedule. On the contrary, the Commission's proposal would be a prescription for wasteful, excess capacity and unnecessary expense.

In its comments, Ameritech notes that its vendors have made available the software to accommodate 888 and 877 access. Ameritech is in the process of deploying this capability and believes that other LECs are doing the same. This capability should be more than sufficient to accommodate all reasonably forseeable toll free service needs for at least a few years, particularly given the measures proposed in this Notice with respect to the administration of toll free numbers. Indeed, in the unlikely event this was not the case, it would be incumbent upon the Commission to take measures to control the consumption of numbers, rather than ordering the deployment of additional codes that would undoubtedly exhaust almost immediately.

B. The Commission Should Establish Rules to Protect Subscribers with Vanity Numbers While Preventing Others From Depleting the Supply of 888 Numbers by Claiming their 800 Number in the 888 Code.

In its comments, Ameritech opposed measures to identify so-called "vanity numbers" and to accord subscribers with such numbers special preferences with respect to the corresponding 888 numbers. Ameritech stated that the only practical approach would be to assign 888 numbers on a first-come, first-served basis. After reviewing the comments and further considering the matter, Ameritech believes that a first-come, first-served reservation process for all 888 numbers would not serve the public interest. Ameritech explains below the basis for this conclusion and sets forth a better alternative.

Underlying Ameritech's initial opposition to protective measures for vanity numbers, and its support for a first-come, first-served reservation process, was Ameritech's belief that it would be impossible to identify which 800 numbers were vanity numbers and which were not, particularly given the broad definition of vanity numbers offered in the Notice. Ameritech was concerned that, without the ability to define a limited class of vanity numbers, any measures the Commission took would be so broad in scope as to hasten significantly the depletion of 888, and subsequently other toll free codes.

Ameritech now believes that its position was flawed. Indeed,
Ameritech believes that a pure, first-come, first-served approach for all 888

reservations would neither help prevent premature exhaust of 888 numbers nor best protect the interests of subscribers with vanity numbers.

Perhaps the key deficiency of a pure, first-come, first-served approach is that it fails to ensure that toll free numbers are used efficiently. Subscribers can reserve their 800 number in the 888 code if for no other reason than to reduce the incidence of misdialed calls or to hedge against consumer confusion resulting from the deployment of a new toll free code. Indeed, because the "cost" of obtaining a toll free number is minimal, many 800 service subscribers will have every incentive to reserve their 800 number in the 888 code, even if they have no real need for an additional number. In this respect, a first-come, first-served system is no more likely to protect against the premature exhaust of 888 numbers than would a system that gave all 800 service subscribers a right-of-first-refusal. On the contrary, the only difference between a right-of-first-refusal system and a pure, first-come, first-served system is that the former guarantees subscribers the rights to their 888 number, while the latter system pits them in a race with other subscribers and RespOrgs to claim the number.

A better approach -- one that protects against the premature depletion of toll free codes, while accommodating the interests of some subscribers in protecting their considerable investment in their 800 number -- is to prohibit most 800 service subscribers from obtaining their 800 number in the 888 code, while establishing a limited right-of-first-refusal for other subscribers. To implement this approach, Ameritech proposes that each RespOrg be permitted to identify up to ten percent of its 800 numbers as vanity numbers. Subscribers with those numbers would be given a right-of-first-refusal to the

corresponding 888 number. Other subscribers would be prohibited from obtaining the 888 number corresponding to their 800 number.⁵

Allowing ten percent of 800 service subscribers to obtain their corresponding 888 number would not significantly drain the reserves of 888 numbers. At the same time, this measure should ensure that subscribers whose numbers are most valuable do not suffer undue harm from the opening of a new toll free code. Ameritech notes in this regard that only about five percent of 800 service numbers are listed in 800 directory assistance.⁶ While undoubtedly some vanity numbers are not listed in directory assistance service, Ameritech believes it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of them are. Indeed, to the extent vanity numbers have special value, it is because those numbers have been heavily advertised and promoted to mass consumer markets. It seems self-evident that the vast majority of such numbers would be listed in 800 directory assistance, that businesses that invest heavily in promoting their 800 number would take the very basic step of a directory assistance listing. Since, as noted, only about five percent of 800 numbers are listed in directory assistance service, no more than ten percent of 800 numbers should be protected as vanity numbers.

Ameritech recommends that certain 800 service subscribers be accorded a right-of-first-refusal to their 888 number because of the unique role 800 service has played in the business world. Because 800 calls are free to the caller, and because 800 service subscribers have been able to choose virtually any number they want, without regard to geographic area codes and NXXs, 800 service has become a particularly important and unique marketing tool. Moreover, many 800 service subscribers who have invested heavily in promoting their 800 number could not have forseen that a new toll free code would have to be opened so quickly. Therefore, any action the Commission takes to protect certain 800 service subscribers should in no way establish a precedent that subscribers to other services, such as 900 service, 500 service, or plain old telephone service (POTS), have similar interests in their telephone numbers that warrant protection. If the Commission does not make this clear, administration of these other services, particularly POTS after local number portability, would be all but impossible.

^{6 800} Users Coalition Comments at 16-17.

Ameritech believes, further, that each RespOrg should be responsible for designating which of its 800 service numbers should be treated as a vanity number — up to a maximum of 10% of its total numbers. RespOrgs are in the best position to assess the value that their subscribers' 800 numbers have acquired and to protect the numbers that are most valuable. While undoubtedly RespOrgs will protect more heavily used numbers before they protect less frequently used numbers, this is not necessarily inappropriate, since numbers that account for the most traffic are more likely to have intrinsic value and warrant protection than other numbers. In any event, Ameritech is aware of no better solution for identifying a limited set of numbers to be given protection, and the alternatives of protecting all numbers or no numbers are unsatisfactory. Therefore, while recognizing that this may not be a perfect solution, Ameritech believes it is the best alternative available.

Ameritech emphasizes that a key to this proposal is prohibiting subscribers not designated by their RespOrg for protection from reserving their 800 number in the 888 code. This measure -- or some other measure that will deter subscribers from reserving the corresponding 888 number unless they have a <u>substantial</u> need for that number is essential to ensuring the efficient management of toll free numbers as new toll free codes are opened.

C. It is Unnecessary to Transfer DSMI's Functions to a Third Party

In its comments, Ameritech argued that DSMI should be allowed to continue performing its current SMS/800 functions. It explained that DSMI currently serves two purposes: assisting the BOCs in fulfilling their FCC-mandated obligation of tariffing SMS/800 access, and helping the BOCs to manage the SMS/800 database by, for example, serving as an industry interface for requested software changes to the SMS. It argued that designating Lockheed IMS as administrator of the Number Administration and Service Center addresses any concerns regarding discrimination or access to sensitive information, and it noted that no complaint has ever been filed alleging that DSMI has discriminated or otherwise been unresponsive to the industry as a whole in the performance of its functions. Other commenters echo the sentiment that DSMI is performing its responsibilities efficiently and in an even-handed, fair manner.⁷

Although Ameritech believes that the transfer of DSMI functions to a neutral third party is unnecessary, Ameritech wishes to emphasize its continuing support for the Commission's initiative to transfer administration of the North American Numbering Plan to an independent administrator. Ameritech believes that some parties who support the transfer of DSMI functions are under a mistaken impression as to exactly what DSMI's functions are. These functions, Ameritech believes, do not implicate the Commission's interest in transferring number administration

AirTouch Paging Comments at 17; Scherers Communications Group Comments at 19.

responsibilities to a neutral third party because DSMI does not play any role in

the administration or assignment of 800 numbers or 800 NXXs.

Nevertheless, if the Commission concludes that a transfer of DSMI's

functions is integral to its overall policies on numbering matters, Ameritech

would not oppose a separate proceeding to address how to accomplish such a

transfer. At a minimum, any such proceeding would have to address

precisely which of DSMI's responsibilities were being transferred and how to

accommodate the legitimate interest of the BOCS in protecting assets and

intellectual properties that currently support the SMS/800 data base.

Respectfully Submitted,

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November 20, 1995

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Toni R. Acton, do hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Ameritech Reply has been served on the parties listed on the attached service list, by first class mail, postage prepaid, on this 20th day of November, 1995.

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